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AUTHOR Foltz, Mary Jo
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ABSTRACT

This guide provides specific activities designed for use with the Clifford-the-Dog books to enhance students' personal development and enjoyment of literature. The general format for each activity includes the title of the Clifford book to be used, synopsis of the story, introduction to the book, and follow-up project. Activities are provided for the following books: "Clifford Takes a Trip," "Clifford, the Big Red Dog," "Clifford, the Small Red Puppy," "Clifford Gets a Job," "Clifford's Halloween," "Clifford's Tricks," "Clifford's Good Deeds," "Clifford at the Circus," and "Clifford Goes to Hollywood." (HOD)

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THE CLIFFORD BOOKS:

AN ACTIVITY GUIDE

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Author's Note

Multi-ideas can inspire reading-writing activities. Hopefully, the specific literature activities designed for the Clifford books will provide valuable reading experiences for students. Perhaps these activities will spark original ideas to use with a variety of picture storybooks to enhance students' personal development and enjoyment of literature.

In addition to the activities described in this book, children enjoy writing original stories about further adventures of Clifford on Clifford-shaped writing paper. Writing original stories on Clifford shapes extends to use of many other motivating shapes such as a Jack-in-the-Box, owl, balloon, or tooth. Such writing activities contribute to the development of children's reading abilities.

Dr. Mary Jo Foltz
849 Linwood Street
Vacaville, California 95688

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Objectives

To assist the students to increase their enjoyment and delight in literature by:

1. extending time spent on reflection with the Clifford books by a variety of listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities.

2. examining values presented in the Clifford stories.

3. increasing personal growth and development opportunities in reading by extending interests and preferences for the long range purpose of becoming one who continues to read throughout a lifetime.

Evaluation: Informal and Varied

If evaluation of children's response to literature usually is not done formally, then informal observations of children as they listen, read, discuss, or write in connection with their literary encounters can be used. If each of the activities cannot encompass all the values of literature, or if children's literary experiences can be evaluated only partially, then many and varied activities can and should be provided for children to try to overcome these limitations.

Questioning could be used for evaluation. First, evaluation ostensibly could be accomplished by asking children what they thought of the book. Responses could be recorded, categorized, then tabulated. Second, teacher questions may help evaluate children's response. Do the students willingly participate in the activities? Are students enthusiastic during listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities? Do children reread books? Do they compare books with related themes? Are children able to discuss values such as helpfulness, generosity, and persistence? Notes detailing specific instances or happenings observed in the process of sharing books can be kept for evaluation purposes.

Activities: Overview

The general format for each activity consists of introducing the book, sharing the book, and the follow-up project.

Introduce individual books briefly before sharing them through reading. For example, to introduce Clifford Goes To Hollywood, say "Why do you think Clifford went to Hollywood? Where is Hollywood? Would you like to be a movie star in Hollywood? Would you rather be on TV? Would you like to act in a play at school? Why, or why not? In this story, let's think about these ideas and see what happens."

To share the book, read it to the group, showing the pictures at the same time. Then arrange for students to read the book themselves. Vary the procedure by giving students copies of the book to read along with you if you have multiple copies. For beginning and remedial readers, it may be helpful to say, "Turn the page," to keep readers together while following the story.

Although children's responses, their expressions of spontaneous feeling, can be observed while sharing the books, story information may be clarified, reviewed, and extended in the process of creating projects. Descriptions of specific projects will be given for:

Clifford Takes A Trip

Clifford, The Big Red Dog

Clifford, The Small Red Puppy

Clifford Gets A Job

Clifford's Halloween

Clifford's Tricks

Clifford's Good Deeds

Clifford At The Circus

Clifford Goes To Hollywood

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Follow-Up: Dramatic Reading In The Round

To introduce the method of characterization used in the dramatic reading in the round, share the following book with the students--Leo Lionni, Little Blue and Little Yellow. New York: Ivan Obolensky, Inc., 1959. The story is told with abstract figures made of colored construction paper.

Prepare three scenes on long sheets of butcher paper. Scene I - school, bus, Emily's house, neighbor's house, park; Scene II - long, winding, flat freeway with off-ramp to the repair garage, wet cement with dog prints, traffic jam, and toll bridge; Scene III - mountains, trees, camping equipment, tables, and campfire. Place scenery around a rug, or other marked-off area. Attach I, III to backs of chairs; lay II flat.

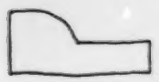
Prepare the following abstract figures as characters in the story.

Clifford
(large red)

Emily
(Yellow)

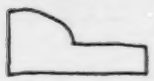
Mother
(Yellow)

Father
(Yellow)

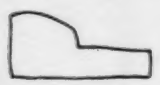


Woman Next Door
(Pink)

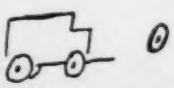
Little Old Man
(Blue)



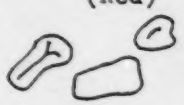
Toll Gate Person
(Black)



Truck With Wheel Off
(Green) (Black)



Meat From The Truck
(Red)



Mama Bear
(Dark Brown)

Baby Bears
(Tan)

The audience - six or seven children - sits on the rug as the story flows through the scenes using the abstract shapes. Standing behind the scenery, ten children play the parts by holding the abstract shapes, moving them through the three scenes. The student moving the shape representing Emily reads the book. The teacher reads a short section of the story to allow Emily and her group to move from Scene I to Scene III, leaving Clifford at home in Scene I. Remind the audience to be sure and watch the shapes representing characters as children move them. The audience likes to see a real shoe thrown toward Clifford when he begins to howl. This provides a change of pace, providing action within the rug space surrounded by scenery.

The Clifford symbol can bend and fold. When the Little Old Man gives Clifford meat from the truck, Clifford can hold it in his mouth.

(This procedure could be adapted as a flannel board story.)

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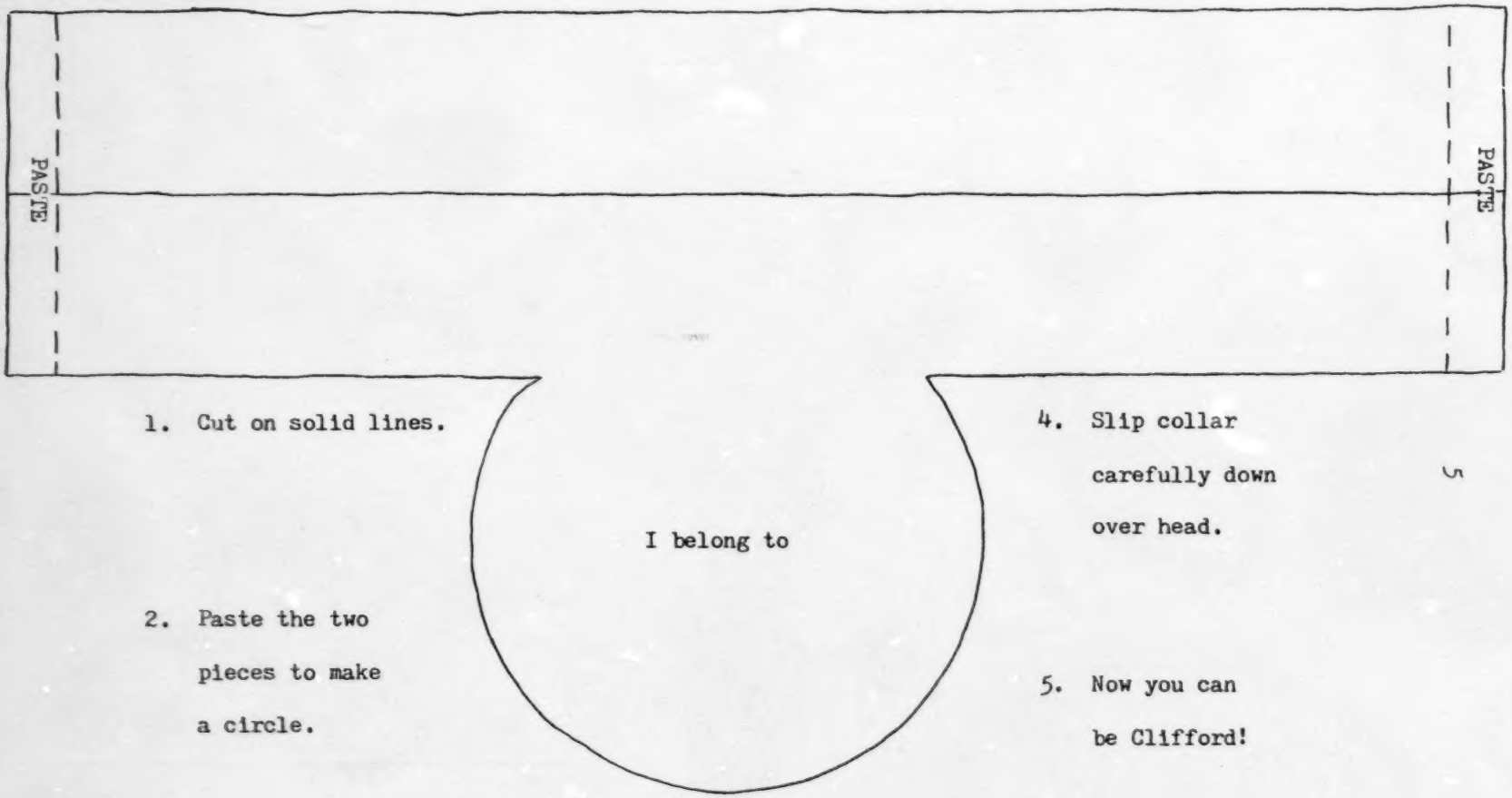

1. Cut on solid lines.

2. Paste the two pieces to make a circle.

3. Roll the dog tag so it won't hang straight down.

4. Slip collar carefully down over head.

5. Now you can be Clifford!

Discuss questions children might want to ask Mr. Bridwell. For example, "Where did you get your idea for the big red dog? How have children helped you write books?" Help them express their opinions and enthusiasm. Write children's ideas on spelling cards. These words can be copied into their letters.

Mr. Bridwell's address is: Box 869, High Street, Edgartown, Mass. 02539.

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Bridwell, Norman. Clifford Gets A Job. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1965.

Synopsis: Clifford wants to earn his own way, so he tries jobs as a circus dog, farm dog, and police dog. As payment for his help in catching speeding robbers, Clifford receives dog food each week.

Introducing The Book: "Clifford wants to earn his own way. I wonder what he will do to get a job. As you hear the story, think of what would be a good job for Clifford."

Follow-Up: Mobile

Discuss the concept of mobile--a lightweight set of figures which hang from wires or string in perfect balance and can move when the air moves. Using a clothes hangar or other wire base, attach dog food cans with labels which have statements applying to the three jobs Clifford had.

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Bridwell, Norman. Clifford's Tricks. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1969.

Synopsis: Emily Elizabeth and Martha compare their dogs' abilities to fetch a newspaper, play dead, speak, and roll over. When Martha falls into the river trying to get Bruno to walk the railing, Clifford saves Martha and Bruno. Clifford is forgiven by the police for his former overenthusiastic performance of tricks.

Introducing The Book: "Have you ever wished you were bigger or better than someone else? Have you ever felt responsible for someone else? I wonder if this will matter when a trick goes wrong in this story."

Follow-Up: Role Playing

The Clifford books are well suited to role playing because plots contain problem situations which can be used as the basis for the role playing. Students can role play the entire story because it is fairly short and also gives them continuity for the idea to be role played. Give the option of keeping the same ending or making up new endings. I noticed that as one group was beginning to change the ending, children shifted twice because they did not want the ending to result in injury or death.

To have the group consider a new ending, ask "When Martha slips off the railing into the river, what will Emily, Clifford, and Bruno do?" You can add a new character, a reporter, who interviews each of the characters, after watching the rescue from a helicopter.

If you have enough students, you can have two groups role play the story and another group evaluate the role playing and new endings. The judges discuss their criteria, based on input from the total group, while each group is planning the role playing, arranging props, and warming up on the dialogue and action which essentially will be extemporaneous. Evaluation can deal with interpretation of characters' feelings, empathy, or awareness of differing points of view.

Bridwell, Norman. Clifford's Good Deeds. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1975.

Synopsis: Clifford performs good deeds with Tim, a Cub Scout. Emily, Clifford, and Tim try to help rake leaves, paint a fence, rescue a kitten, fix a tire, and deliver newspapers, but their good deeds end humorously. When Clifford mistakes a workman for an accident victim and tries to save him, Tim decides that is enough help. When the trio comes upon a house on fire, Clifford saves the children. They all receive an award.

Introducing The Book: "As you listen to the story about Clifford's good deeds, think of what you would say to him about them if he came to visit us."

Follow-Up: Dramatic Choral Reading

The introductory question helps elicit language for the chorus which can be worked in between sections of the book as it is being dramatized. Groups can act out each situation--raking leaves and Clifford's big sneeze which scatters the leaves, etc.

Children need help and practice varying their choral reading. You can help them vary the speed, volume, and emphasis while speaking the lines. A discussion of the use of the chorus in Greek drama is well accepted as part of the explanation to aid in improving production of choral reading.

Some examples of oral language recorded for choral reading are:

1. Clifford, you're a hero! You're a big dog. You're a good dog. You're soft. You're very red. You're helpful. You're brave. You're a real hero!

2. Based on a generalization made by a classmate, first graders wrote statements using the same language pattern. This exercise requires careful thought to select words for empty slots. (_____ is better than not _____.) Trying is better than not trying. Playing is better than not playing. Going is better than not going. Halloween is better than no Halloween. Helping is better than not helping.

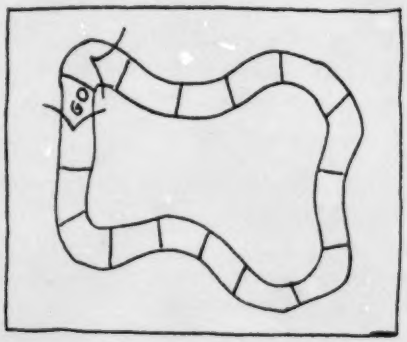
Bridwell, Norman. Clifford At The Circus. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1977.

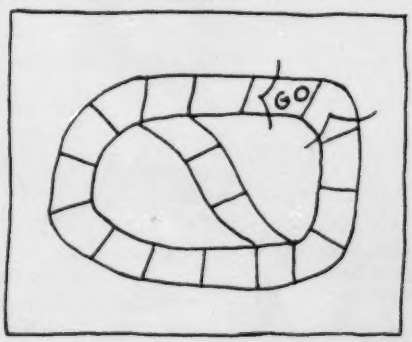
Synopsis: Clifford helps the animal trainer, clowns, tight rope walker, elephant parade, human cannonball, and finally uses his ingenuity to save Emily and the Ringmaster who drift away in an air balloon.

Introducing The Book: "Have you ever wanted to join the circus? Think of what you would like to do in the circus as we find out about Clifford and Emily at the circus."

Follow-Up: Game Board With Story Grammar

Prepare the game board on butcher paper. Informally discuss setting, theme, and plot while drawing scenes on sections in either of these two patterns.





The game board outlines the story. You may use the game board at different levels of difficulty by devising flexible game rules. If you are simply having students color the game board, informally discuss setting, theme, and plot as they work. Design more complicated rules which require students to (1) signal the number of moves by clapping out the number showing on the die, or (2) make up questions for each other when they land on a section.

(For an alternate activity, print vocabulary words in each section of the game board.)

Bridwell, Norman. Clifford Goes To Hollywood. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1980.

Synopsis: After a successful screen test, Clifford goes to Hollywood and becomes a star. Clifford acquires a big doghouse, special food, expensive dog collars, and a bone-shaped pool. Even though his footprint is placed in cement alongside those of other stars, numerous fans and parties do not prevent Clifford from missing Emily.

Introducing The Book: "Do you like to act in plays? Why, or why not? What do you think it would be like to be a movie star? Why do you suppose Clifford went to Hollywood? How do you think Clifford will feel about his experiences in Hollywood?"

Follow-Up: Feelings

Discuss how Clifford's feelings changed from the time he was chosen to go to Hollywood until he returned to Emily.

It may be necessary to develop vocabulary to explain a variety of feelings. Use pictures as examples to elicit response. Some possible vocabulary words are: excited, disappointed, confused, silly, sorry, embarrassed, lonesome, satisfied, glad, nervous, timid, love, joy, wonder.

Following the development of feelings vocabulary terms, reinforce meanings by discussing questions such as: How do you feel on your birthday? When you ride your bike? When you play with your friend? When you help someone? When your work is done right? When you are away from home? When it's late at night? When someone yells at you? When you are late? When you are too early? When you find some money in the grass? When everything seems easy and turns out right?